VOL. 9 NO. 11
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ISSUE NO. 193

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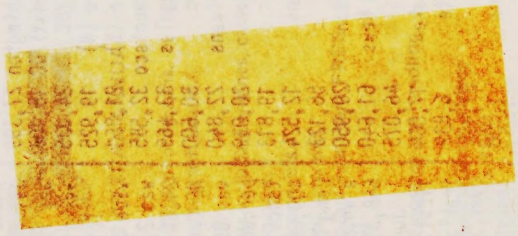

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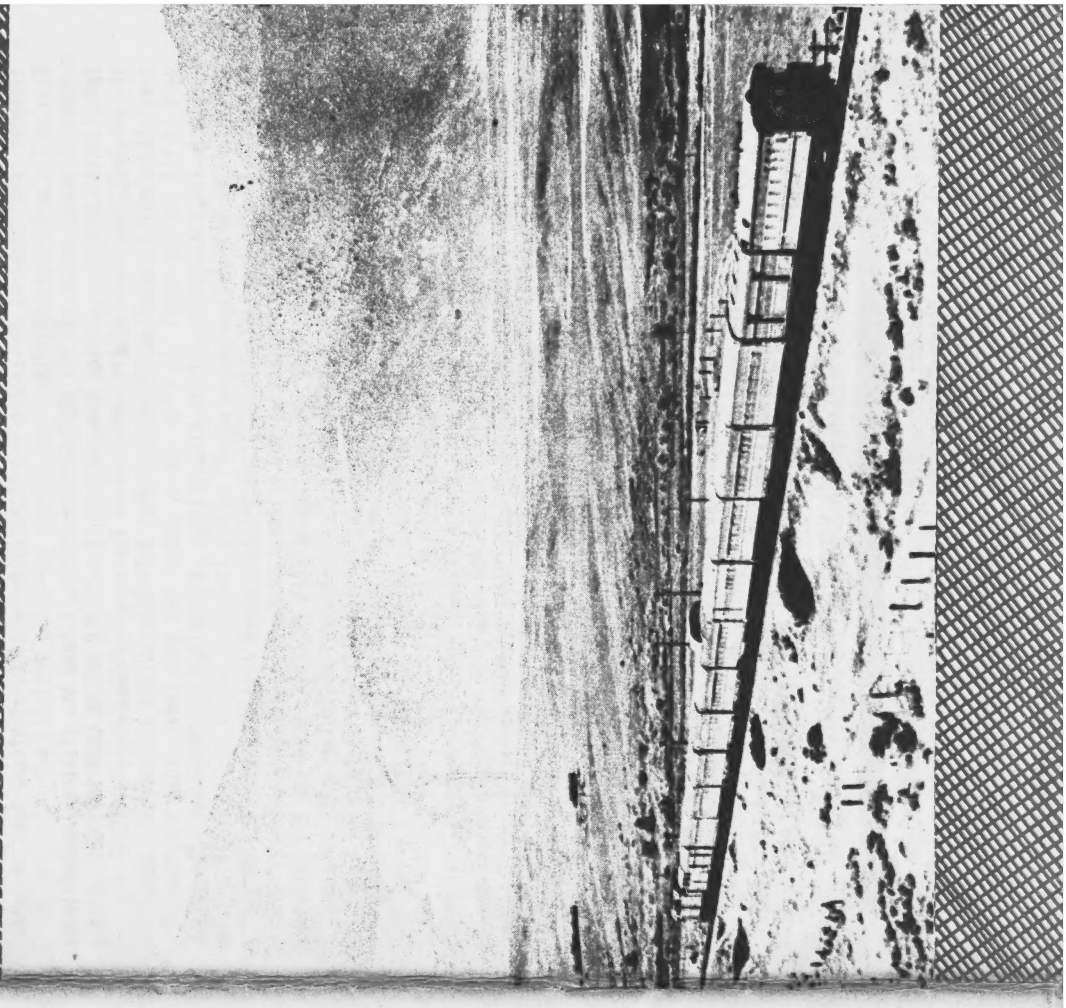

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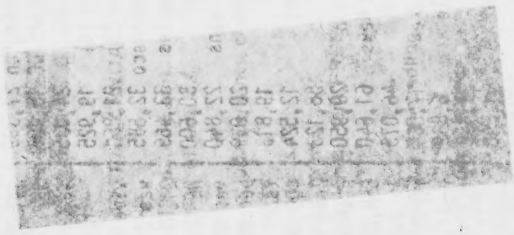

FIRST CLASS

LETTERS

The Administration and the majority of the Congress have recently taken a giant step toward total loss of credibility by the American People. I am referring to the upcoming Amtrak cutbacks--specifically the FLORIDIAN and the NY-Florida service; but also the LONE STAR, NATIONAL LIMITED, and NORTH COAST HIAWATHA.

There is, by all parameters, a clearcut, overwhelming public mandate not to cut off this service. But there is also a clearcut "no win" situation as far as the traveling public is concerned.

When one looks at the evidence, none of these trains should be cut off, and no jury in this vast land would allow it. One only has to look at the energy savings, the sustained increased ridership, and the economics involved--and the logical choice has been ignored--but the logical is not always done in big government, even tho big government is supposed to be responsive to the people in our Democratic society. What happened to leaders who stand up for what is right and just, regardless of the consequences?

One only has to look at the manipulation of data to see the glaring inconsistencies. In the Amtrak projection for combining the SILVER METEOR-CHAMPION, and cutting the service, they found that in peak months the expected demand would EXCEED the simulated consist capacity. So what do they do? They adjust the forecast downward to fit the capacity! In other words, Amtrak has more riders than they can handle on the present three NY-Florida trains, so they cut back the number of seats and adjust their forecast accordingly!

The other clearcut manipulation of data occurs where Amtrak negates 75% of the increase in ridership in recent months in their projections, which profoundly affects the FLORIDIAN. Where in the legislation does it say to subtract 75% of ridership increases in projections? It looks like a clearcut manipulation to make the data fit the desires of those who want to cut service! Ex-Secretary Adams said "Vote by buying tickets." The public did--all to no avail! The FLORIDIAN shows 75 passengers per train mile using this "fudge factor", when in reality for the latest month available (June) it carried 120 (up 69.1%)!

The ICC had jurisdiction over train discontinuances prior to Amtrak, and still has in cases of non-Amtrak services. Look at the record in two recent cases--the CRESCENT and the RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR. Both cases were decided against discontinuance after overwhelming public input at the hearings--and the trains are still running--full!

Now look at the record regarding the FLORIDIAN. Amtrak held discontinuance hearings in 1977. They received overwhelming public input to continue the train and re-route it thru Atlanta. They went back to Washington and said that's all well and good, but now the rules have changed--we have the DOT report recommending cutting the FLORIDIAN (which still was not running thru Atlanta), so forget what the people said; new hearings will be held. New hearings were held with the same result; and again the public was ignored as the train is due to come off October 1. Why ask the public what they want, if you are going to do just the opposite anyway? Or, to carry it a step further, why have elections? This is not the way this country is supposed to be run!

Also, it seems the ICC is marching to one drummer (the public) and the Administration and Congress in concert with Amtrak, to another!

What is the average citizen to think in this matter, when it seems that his appointed and elected officials are doing what they darn well please, and ignoring the electorate?

Dr. Charles A. Dunn
Miami, Florida

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ON THE COVER

One of the Amtrak trains on the hit list, the NORTH COAST HIAWATHA, is seen on July 14, 1979, running eastbound thru Montana. The train, which includes a BN business car on the rear, is 2-3 miles west of Whitehall MT, having just dropped down from Pipestone pass. It was running about one hour late when Paul Rayton took this photograph.

I agree completely with Glenn Lee's letter (last issue) on how to keep one of the trains on the hit list going--by running the FLORIDIAN via Atlanta. Also run it via Indianapolis and feed it from Detroit-Toledo and Cleveland-Columbus-Cincinnati at Louisville, downtown. Then ridership would probably outdo the STARLIGHT.

As for the NATIONAL LIMITED, extend it to Denver via La Junta and Colorado Springs. Easterners could get that far west without the shuffle of Union Station, Chicago.

As for the NORTH COAST HIAWATHA, run it daily on its current schedule with a connecting section to and from Portland at Pasco. Combine the EMPIRE BUILDER and the NORTH STAR on a flipflop schedule for the BUILDER. This would provide Seattle-Chicago connections with all Eastern trains, give Fargo decent train hours, and provide day and night service Seattle-Spokane. One could see the Cascade mountains.

As for the HILLTOPPER, I would make it a night train between Washington and Chattanooga via Lynchburg, Roanoke and Knoxville. In addition, I would combine the SHENANDOAH and the BLUE RIDGE, making an overnight businessman's train between Washington and Cincinnati. I would flipflop the CARDINAL schedule, allowing all Virginia and West Virginia residents to catch Western trains, and providing a businessman's overnight train Cincinnati-Chicago.

When the so-called leaders in Washington wake up to such ideas, when mail is put back on all trains for maximum service, and when operating unions work for an hourly or annual wage as Amtrak employees, Amtrak's deficits will almost vanish. It is a shame no one is willing to help.

Samuel E. Stokes, Jr.
Alstead, New Hampshire

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AMTRAK'S PROJECTIONS OF PATRONAGE USED TO DECIDE ON ROUTE CUTBACKS (Data released by NARP)

TABLE 1: Amtrak long distance trains ranked by projected avoidable loss per passenger mile for fiscal year 80.

Train	
Palmetto (New York-Savannah)	3.9¢
*Silver Meteor (NY-Charleston-Miami)	
Silver Star (NY-Columbia-Miami/St. Petersburg)	4.3¢
*Champion (NY-Columbia-St. Petersburg)	
Panama Ltd. (Chicago-New Orleans)	4.4¢
Sunset Ltd. (New Orleans-Los Angeles)	4.7¢
Montrealer (Washington-Montreal)	4.9¢
Coast Starlight (Los Angeles-Seattle)	5.1¢
Southwest Ltd. (Chicago-Albuquerque-Los Angeles)	5.1¢
Crescent (New York-Atlanta-New Orleans)	5.9¢
San Francisco Zephyr (Chicago-Omaha-Oakland)	5.9¢
Broadway Ltd. (NY/Washington-Ft. Wayne-Chicago)	6.2¢
Lake Shore Ltd. (Boston/NY-Cleveland-Chicago)	6.4¢
Empire Builder (Chicago-Havre-Seattle)	6.5¢
**National Ltd. (NY/Washington-Kansas City)	7.5¢
**North Coast Hiawatha (Chicago-Billings-Seattle)	7.9¢
Pioneer (Salt Lake City-Seattle)	8.3¢
**Lone Star (Chicago-Wichita-Dallas/Houston)	11.1¢
Inter-American (Chicago-Little Rock-Laredo)	13.1¢
**Floridian (Chicago-Miami/St. Petersburg)	13.4¢
Cardinal (Washington-Charleston,WV-Chicago)	13.5¢
**Hilltopper (Washington-Roanoke-Ashland, KY)	25.0¢
Shenandoah (Washington-Parkersburg-Cincinnati)	25.7¢

TABLE 2: Amtrak long distance trains ranked by projected passenger miles-per-train-mile (also showing % increase of PM/TM from May 1978 to May 1979).

Train	Proj. PM/TM	Proj. % increase
Montrealer (Washington-Montreal)	257	22.5
Coast Starlight (Los Angeles-Seattle)	252	80.4
*Silver Meteor (NY-Charleston, SC-Miami)	232	*15.7
Southwest Ltd. (Chicago-Albuquerque-Los Ang.)	201	46.9
Broadway Ltd. (NY/Wash.-Ft. Wayne-Chicago)	189	19.2
*Champion (NY-Columbia-St. Petersburg)	179	*15.7
Crescent (NY-Atlanta-New Orleans)	174	?
Sunset Ltd. (New Orleans-Los Angeles)	172	43.8
Palmetto (New York-Charleston, SC-Savannah)	166	*15.7
Lake Shore Ltd. (Boston/NY-Cleve.-Chicago)	165	34.9
Empire Builder (Chicago-Havre-Seattle)	157	27.9
San Francisco Zephyr (Chicago-Oakland)	148	61.2
Panama Ltd. (Chicago-New Orleans)	144	21.1
**North Coast Hiawatha (Chicago-Billings-Seattle)	140	+34.1
**National Ltd. (NY/Washington-Kansas City)	103	22.2
**Lone Star (Chicago-Oklahoma-Dallas/Houston)	102	41.4
Inter-American (Chicago-Little Rock-Laredo)	78	86.8
Pioneer (Salt Lake City-Seattle)	77	77.1
**Floridian (Chicago-Miami/St. Petersburg)	75	52.5
Cardinal (Washington-Charleston,WV-Chicago)	71	59.6
**Hilltopper (Washington-Richmond-Ashland, KY)	29	8.8
Shenandoah (Washington-Parkersburg-Cincinnati)	26	-6.8

FOOTNOTES ON THE TABLES:

*NY-Florida capacity will be reduced by eliminating the CHAMPION (leaving Columbia SC served only in the middle of the night) and adding a St. Petersburg-Jacksonville leg to the SILVER METEOR. Amtrak projects the expanded SILVER METEOR at 262 PM/TM but says it would be 282.5 without the capacity constraint. And that latter figure does not include the substantial traffic on the Columbia SC line which would effectively lose service. (PM/TM was not available for SILVER STAR.)

**Trains which Amtrak plans to discontinue.

+This figure may be an understatement because it also includes the Chicago-Minneapolis portion of the NORTH STAR, a weaker train to be continued. (For the same month, the Minneapolis-Duluth portion of the NORTH STAR had a 30.9% DECLINE in PM/TM, one of only two routes outside the Northeast Corridor which posted a decline.)

NARP'S COMMENTS ON AMTRAK'S CUTBACK PROJECTIONS:

1. AMTRAK PROJECTIONS OF RIDERSHIP ARE TOO LOW. Data base was April thru June. From these data, Amtrak assumed retention of only 25% of "energy-crisis-induced" ridership. Since April-June includes several weeks before the energy crisis hit, the effective retention rate Amtrak is using is even less than 25%. Twenty-five per cent was roughly the retention Amtrak experienced after the last energy crisis (in 1974). Most observers agree this present crisis is more pervasive.

2. NORTH COAST HIAWATHA COSTS TOO HIGH, REVENUES TOO LOW. Amtrak estimates are based on continued use of old equipment, even tho the other Chicago-Seattle train will convert to Superliners in October, and so would the HIAWATHA if it continued. Even DOT projections assumed an increase in ridership attributable to more attractive new equipment. The new cars should also cost less to operate.

3. BUTTE VS. HELENA DEFLATES REVENUES, INCREASES COSTS. Amtrak estimates are based on continued operation via Butte and Deer Lodge instead of via Helena (the state capital) and Logan. Helena is also closer to the major city of Great Falls. Amtrak has already held public hearings in Helena and Butte and probably would reroute via Helena if the service was continuing. This might also reduce costs since tracks thru Helena would be shared with BN thru freights; Amtrak is virtually the sole user of the Butte line.

4. CITIES WHICH WOULD LOSE ALL RAIL PASSENGER SERVICE: Columbus OH; Louisville KY; Dayton OH. The state of Oklahoma would lose all service as well. Indianapolis would lose a heavily-used train and gain a questionable one: Greyhound runs Chicago-Indianapolis in 3:35 and Amtrak is not expected to do better than about 4:20. Missouri may regret its decision to subsidize the St. Louis-Kansas City segment (of the threatened NATIONAL LIMITED) because the train is not fast enough to attract short-distance business in volume and will lose the long-distance traffic that presently makes it viable.

5. Severe problems preventing restart of service are expected to appear immediately on the NATIONAL LIMITED and NORTH COAST HIAWATHA routes after any discontinuance of the trains.

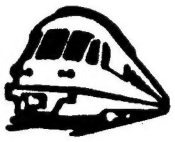
6. The criteria do NOT coincide with energy-efficient thresholds. Trains hauling an average of 100 passengers can still be net energy savers.

AMTRAK'S EVALUATION OF EQUIPMENT CONSTRAINTS ON RIDERSHIP:

Amtrak is often criticized for artificially reducing ridership on some routes by providing train consists that are too small. To meet this criticism, Amtrak prepared the table on the next page, showing computation of seat miles and passenger miles, and actual seats available on threatened trains during the base period used for ridership projections. Said Amtrak: "The average load factor on these trains indicates that seat constraints did not prevent any train from achieving the PM/TM levels necessary to qualify."

Historic Load Factors for Routes Not Included in DOT System Based on April 1978-March 1979 Data

Train #s	Train Name	Seat Miles (000's) (1)	Passenger Miles (000's) (2)	Average Load Factor (5)	Spaces (6)	PM/TM (8)
15/16	Lone Star	232,436	96,887	42%	246	95
17/18	North Coast Hiawatha	157,012	94,086	60%	222	135
19/20	Crescent	N/A	146,908 (9)	N/A	262 (12)	174 (9)
21/22	Inter-American	118,367 (10)	47,149 (10)	40% (10)	170 (11)	69 (11)
25/26	Pioneer	138,946	53,168	38%	170	67
30/31	National	222,064	93,341	42%	262	96
32/33	Shenandoah	41,399	10,547	25%	105	27
50/51	Cardinal	107,298	39,687	37%	194	61
56/57	Floridian	219,436	93,079	42%	218	68
60/61	Montrealer	173,082 (3)	79,158 (3)	46%	224 (7)	162 (3)
66/67	Hilltopper	45,566 (4)	11,866	26%	113	28
83/84	Meteor	334,118	222,401	67%	402	220
85/86	Champion	313,404	154,930	49%	402	166
710/711	San Joaquin	33,573	12,033	36%	137	53
793/794	Pacific International	20,638	7,756	38%	221	68
796/797	Mt. Rainier	29,330	13,576	46%	221	100



FOOTNOTES TO TABLE: (1) Based on marketing Check Point ridership Seat Mile Report Apr 1978-Mar 1979. (2) Based on marketing criteria passenger mile data base Mar 1978; May 1978-Mar 1979. (3) Includes NE Corridor local passengers. (4) Did not operate Richmond-Tri-State during N&W strike Jul 10, 1978-Sep 30, 1978. (5) Ratio of (2) divided by (1). (6) Oct 29, 1978 off peak consist. (7) Space provided north of Springfield. (8) Marketing calculation of criteria base period. (9) From part year Amtrak data adjusted per Southern Railway data. (10) Includes Chicago-St. Louis local train. (11) Space provided and incremental PM/TM south of St. Louis. (12) Amtrak off peak consist.

PROBLEMS OF THE HIT LIST TRAINS

by Alfred E. Ehm

The Amtrak trains on the "hit list" have flaws that prevent them from being good performers. Routing was mentioned here earlier as one such flaw. But a very major problem is lack of management. Any service for which the provider has no interest will not do well, particularly if the traveler has alternatives.

One could categorize the problems of these trains, as for example: (1) validity of end points; (2) connections; (3) schedule; (4) quality of service; (5) fares; and so on. The overall running time is probably not of any particular consequence, but the fares are, not to mention some of the other criteria. (If a traveler can fly daily at certain times from San Antonio to Dallas for $15 in 50 minutes, versus a thrice-weekly INTER-AMERICAN at $25.50, trip time about 8 hours, plus 1 to 3 hours tardiness, what will be his choice, especially when he must deal with discourteous Amtrak clerks?

As for the validity of end points, this is a problem that has plagued and ruined several services, the classic example being the NIAGARA RAINBOW. That train would have done much better if it had been operated thru to Chicago as an overnight train. The prospect of being dumped in Detroit in the middle of the night discouraged all but Detroit-bound passengers. Of course, the SAN JOAQUIN is another fine example. The new schedule definitely helps, but until the route is extended into Los Angeles, the train will not do very well.

The example of the NATIONAL LIMITED, given earlier in RTN, supports my contention that the choice of end terminals is of considerable importance. Extending the train into Denver would improve the viability of the service, not because people would travel from New York to Denver, but because of the intermediates and the fact that other trains would funnel new business to the NATIONAL and vice versa.

Connectivity is certainly important. That was a major problem for the NIAGARA RAINBOW at its Detroit end and is a problem for the Detroit trains now because of the lack of connections into Canada. Other examples are again the SAN JOAQUIN, the PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL, the SUNSET and CRESCENT in New Orleans, maybe even the INTER-AMERICAN in Laredo. A classic example besides the RAINBOW is the HILLTOPPER. When they broke the connections in West Virginia, they ruined the service.

Scheduling is of considerable importance, the latest proof being the SAN JOAQUIN. Another instance is the FLORIDIAN, one of Amtrak's most abused trains. In the case of the SUNSET, Amtrak ruined patronage in San Antonio by changing train times to most inconvenient hours and by providing virtually no timekeeping anymore. The trains were formerly in at 1:00 westbound and about 6:00 eastbound. Now it's shortly before 4:00am and before 6:00am. The latter doesn't matter too much because there is very little business that way (Interstate 10, 12-14 buses a day, plus commuter flights hourly into Hobby Field). Moreover, the quality of service on the SUNSET cannot possibly justify the high fares. Further, even tho Amtrak has an interline agreement with Greyhound for travelers into Jacksonville from New Orleans, local Amtrak clerks ignore that possibility and try to funnel patrons into the CRESCENT (including a night in New Orleans) and the FLORIDIAN.

The low quality of service that Amtrak provides is frustrating, especially in view of the high fares, which are almost at par with airline fares, if not generally higher. While to railfans an exposure to Amtrak atrocities may be an instance of practicing their hobby, the traveling public, except for a tiny percentage, are not railfans, and are in no mood to make allowances for not getting their money's worth. You can see it any day: when you observe an irate passenger yelling at the clerk that never again will they expose themselves to a ride on Amtrak, you know that something is amiss. When no less than 16 pieces of luggage go on to Houston and New Orleans instead of being unloaded in San Antonio, all you get are unhappy customers. And whose

fault is it? Certainly no SP's, because they have nothing more to do with it. Further, being aware, as they are, of the fact that Amtrak has virtually no control over the performance of their own employees, they know that they too can get away with as much as they want to. That is why trains are hours late without exception, equipment breaks down, trains are not serviced, and what else.

Each of the "hit list" trains has a problem uniquely its own. RTN's Pacific Northwest correspondents have pointed out amply how Amtrak let the northern tier service go to ruin. Whose fault is it? Certainly not Amtrak's, according to Amtrak. When there is no accountability, there will be chaos. As long as Mansfield was around, Amtrak had religion. As soon as the influential senator retired, there went the service.

The FLORIDIAN is a story in itself and RTN has documented it in considerable detail for 8 years now. The routing is in part a problem, but the major problem in my opinion is that Amtrak's management never wanted the train and never cared about it. Since it does not operate thru my state of Texas, I am personally little affected by whether it is pulled or not. The cities and states along its route had all the time in the world to raise hell. Maybe they deserve to lose the service.

The SAN JOAQUIN was also a problem train, but I believe that the change in schedule will help. Why it should take five years to make this change, I don't know, but I suspect that the pending lawsuit, as in the case of the INTER-AMERICAN, caught the attention of Amtrak's fine management. Lying to the public, lying to state agencies and the press is one thing, but then when it comes to the point of going before a judge, the lying comes to an end. You can rest assured that California's lawsuit and political pressure had a good deal to do not only with the SAN JOAQUIN but also with Amtrak's miraculous interest in starting up the Ogden to L.A. train, along with Senator Cannon's interest in the matter.

What RTN has said about the LONE STAR is correct, but it involves an obstacle that Amtrak is unable, and unwilling, to overcome. There is no hope whatsoever of getting the train onto SP rails south of Dallas. Also, considering the low quality of service and the fact that the SP will do everything to hinder speedy progress on their rails, it's difficult to say whether patronage would be improved.

The scheme for re-routing the train onto Katy from Dallas into Temple is fraught with problems. Even if that were done, which would take a while in view of Amtrak's snail-like pace, patronage would not increase, the reasons being long travel time, high fares, consistent unreliability, and low quality.

I know from personal experience that the TEXAS CHIEF (former name for the LONE STAR) was one of Amtrak's best trains. Delays did occur, because Santa Fe has a lot of traffic on the single-track line and also did a lot of track work all along. But there was a great deal of professionalism for the first several years. The service started going down under Reistrup and really nose-dived when Amtrak came up with that discontinuance scheme two years ago. It has never recovered, and the Santa Fe, like any railroad, would not mind getting the train off its tracks. People, you know, write to their Congressmen, but freight doesn't.

Behind a battery of microphones, Amtrak President Alan Boyd (right) and Amtrak Board Chairman Harry Edwards (left) announce the restructured route system, following the Aug 29 board meeting. Amtrak photo by Debbie Marciniak.

RAIL CANADA

THREATENED TRAIN CUTBACKS are ahead. The Treasury Board is expected soon to order the Ministry of Transport to cut passenger transport costs by $30 million. Cuts could come in other modes, but the most likely outcome is that rail passenger service will be victimized. Rail supporters remark that the anti-rail bias of the Treasury Board "makes the MOT look like a railfan club." A good strategy for rail supporters to pursue, report RTN's sources, is to examine the contracts between VIA and the railways for excess costs, and to look to better labour productivity. Reportedly top union officials are ready to bargain in good faith, so labour efficiency should be looked at. Many economies in the air mode could be made, including mothballing the controversial Mirabel airport. Higher fuel taxes and landing and other air fees could be sought.

EDMUNDSTON-STE-FOY RAILINER cutback was protested by Transport 2000, and that consumer group has been joined by the city of Edmundston and a number of towns in the affected region. New Brunswick Minister of Transport met with a federal minister to protest, and now New Brunswick Prime Minister Hatfield has begun to complain, concerned that all of northwestern New Brunswick will be deprived of rail service north into Quebec. This topic appears to be heating up.

THE CHICOUTIMI TRAIN was the subject of important hearings the third week in September. Expected to last one day, the hearings ran 3 days and were to resume on the 25th. The question debated was the slow schedule (9 3/4 hours) that CN accords VIA. At the hearings, in Montreal, CN denied wrongdoing, but Transport 2000 and others accused CN of deliberately giving the train a slow schedule to cash in on VIA performance bonuses. CN sent a Vice President and a number of lawyers, who claimed that the former faster schedule was "unrealistic." The CTC, chairing the hearings, asked CN why it ran that "unrealistic" for 20 years then. CN was also embarrassed when VIA produced evidence that over one section of track the freight goes faster, leading a commissioner to ask, "Which is first class, the passenger train or the freight?" Passengers complained of having to spend the night on the floor or in the washroom on the overnight train to Senneterre, as well as about the inadequate accommodations on the Ste-Foy-Hervey connection. To the CN's contention that it had done maintenance of way work between Senneterre and Hervey, the commissioner averred that none had been done for three years.

TROLLEY-BAR SERVICE to sell liquor in ordinary coaches is now legal on VIA, and a lot of booze is reported being sold that way on the Montreal-Toronto runs.

MONTREAL COMMUTER TRAINS are still the focus of protest. Meetings have taken place at Como and Hudson recently, with Transport 2000 spokesmen present.

WESTBOUND VIA TRAINS arriving at Winnipeg are limiting their dining cars to 2 sittings, allowing only 88 passengers to be served, less than half the actual recent loads. The official reason is that the crew changes in Winnipeg. Diners are closed nearly an hour before the stop and passengers are told to eat in the station or to wait until after departure. The problem is compounded by the continuing practice of serving crews their meals during peak meal hours.

SOME PASSENGER CARS on the CANADIAN have appeared with VIA refurbishing. The red stripe above the windows is now blue, as are the (unchanged) names and numbers. The descriptive plates giving the origin of the car names have been removed. The interiors are refurbished in the manner of CN equipment. The CANADIAN carried a Calgary-Vancouver sleeper this summer.

VIA TRAINS 280 and 281 between Flin Flon and Osborne Lake, Manitoba, were ordered discontinued by a CTC decision of May 16, almost overlooked by rail observers. Iron ore hauling on the line has been eliminated, occasioning the discontinuance request, which will not be appealed by rail supporters.

THE "FINAL PLAN" for Canadian rail passenger service is now due to take effect this coming Oct 29, as it applies to transcon service. This means the portion of the SUPER CONTINENTAL that now runs Montreal-Winnipeg will be dropped, and a tri-weekly Winnipeg-Capreol local train substituted. Last year, numerous protests forced the federal cabinet to order a one-year extension of service. Rail supporters are now being urged to write the Transport Minister to urge another such extension. The address is: Hon. Don Mazankowski, M.P., P.C., House of Commons, Ottawa, Ont., Canada.

RICHMOND-LISTER-QUEBEC service will not be revived, decided the CTC. It had been suspended pending a decision, and now VIA will not be required to operate it. Studies found not enough passengers even for the bus, and not much auto traffic.

★★★ A VIA RAIL CANADA ACT? ★★★

Last issue we reported briefly on the Transport Ministry's proposed "VIA Rail Canada Act" which aims to put VIA under direct control of the Ministry, minimizing or eliminating citizen influence, in order to cut passenger train service to a minimum. (As in the U.S., a strong anti-rail bias exists at the Ministry, the equivalent of the U.S. Department of Transportation.)

The Ministry seeks to stop the Canadian Transport Commission (CTC) from setting standards of frequency and quality of service for VIA trains, and it seeks to set strict economic criteria for train discontinuance that would require the CTC to order discontinuances automatically if trains did not meet the Ministry's criteria.

The Canadian Transport Commission has prepared a response to the Ministry's July 26 proposal. The CTC argued that it should retain its regulatory powers because VIA has not shown to date that it always can be depended upon to act in the public interest, and has demonstrated a certain lack of "hustle". It noted that to exempt only VIA and not other railways from CTC regulation would be unwise legally. The CTC said that the Ministry has no mandate to propose such an exemption, as the regulations setting up VIA never have been debated in full in the House or in its committees.

The Transport Ministry believes that the CTC has been too slow in getting passenger trains discontinued, and has cut the "railway passenger deficit" only 11% instead of the desired 35%. The Ministry criticized the CTC's use of public hearings as a delaying tactic that aroused an "emotional atmosphere" around the discontinuance proposals. In its rebuttal, the CTC said that the Ministry's claim that the public opposed abandonments "for reasons of nostalgia...or the fear of losing a service provided mostly by the public treasury" was wrong. Said the CTC: "The public's fear was that entire routes (e.g., either of the CN or CP cross-prairie routes) would be discontinued." The CTC noted that the public responded with many well-informed and helpful submissions about improving service and reducing "losses."

The CTC noted also that the Ministry's figure of a 35% cut in the rail deficit was never transmitted officially to the CTC, "and rightly so--because to have done so would have anticipated and interferred with the hearing process." Even so, said the CTC, it could not have accepted the 35% figure as binding, and the CTC told the Ministry the figure was unrealistic.

Because the Ministry is proposing to remove the CTC's authority to issue passenger service orders (as the ICC regulates adequacy of service in the U.S.), the right of the public to have an independent body like the CTC to go to with complaints about level and quality of service would be lost, complained the CTC in its rebuttal paper. What the Ministry wants to substitute for the CTC's function are its own "subsidiary service requests"--contracts between VIA and the Ministry that the CTC would then be required to recommend. The CTC could rule on the adequacy of the Ministry's SSR's only if complaints were made by the public.

On train discontinuances, the Ministry wants to place this decision-making power directly in the hands of the Transport Minister. (It would be as if Brock

Adams had had the power directly to order Amtrak routes discontinued, and without holding public hearings unless he felt inclined to do so.) The Minister would make these decisions "upon operational advice from VIA, financial advice from the Department of Finance and Treasury Board, and policy advice from his officials."

Concluded the CTC: "(we) would like to warn of the serious consequences of this proposed legislation, both for the public and for the Commission. The Commission would be remiss in its duty as a government agency if it failed to make its concerns known to senior officials of the Ministry in particular and to the Government in general. ...these concerns have been shared by other government bodies... and ... repeated warnings by all concerned to the Ministry staff developing the legislation have gone unheeded to this point."

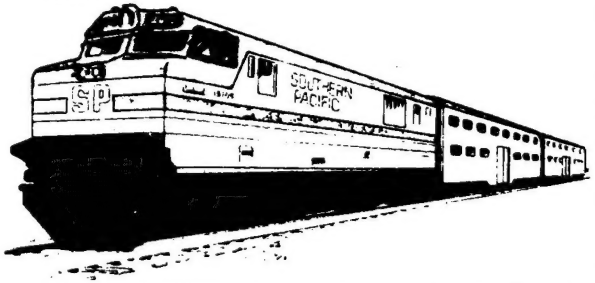
URBAN-SUBURBAN TRANSIT

PRESIDENT CARTER'S PROPOSED $13 billion for mass transit over the next 10 years (see last issue) should be doubled, said NY State Transportation Commissioner William C. Hennessy Sep 25 at an American Public Transit Ass'n meeting in New York. Hennessy called Carter's plan a "good idea, as far as it goes," but asked "Why such a small portion (of the windfall oil profits tax), less than 10%, when transportation uses so much of the nation's energy--about 25%"

SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION Neil Goldschmidt on Sep 14 sent the above proposed legislation to Congress--the Transportation Energy Act of 1979, it is called.

GRAND CENTRAL TERMINAL was the scene of a fire and thick smoke between 1:30 and 4pm on Sep 8 when flames broke out in a Conrail electric commuter car in a storage area and spread to 5 empty cars on tracks 118 and 119. Train service was halted while firemen fought the blaze, but subway operation continued. Four people reportedly suffered minor injuries.

ILLINOIS CENTRAL GULF commuter trains were stalled by a loss of electric power between Chicago's Loop and 95th Street from 7:45 to 9am on Sep 4 when an explosion occurred in a power generating plant. Twenty trains carrying about 23,000 riders were affected.



THIS IS A Southern Pacific commute train? (illustration at left). While the engine design may not be entirely kosher, the ad from which it comes catches the reader's eye in Bay Area newspapers and informs him of the 40% discount tickets sponsored by Caltrans and the San Mateo and Santa Clara County transit agencies.

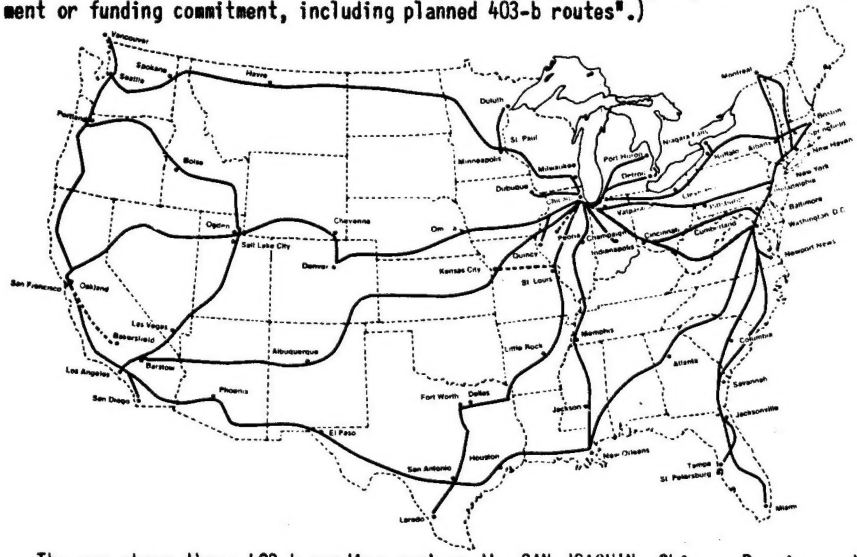
THE BAD SUMMER for commuters in the San Francisco area extends itself into a bad autumn. The BART system is still shut down (since Aug 31) by a labor dispute, with no definite opening in sight. Golden Gate Transit ferry strike continues. And San Francisco's cable cars were shut down the early morning of Sep 26 for extensive repairs. Poor maintenance and age have resulted in the need for a $41 million overhaul, said the city's Public Utilities Commission, and federal funds are being sought. Repair work will require several months.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION says it never promised NY Governor Carey $644 million in transit aid, altho Carey promised the money to NYC Mayor Koch in April 1978 in return for support for the controversial Westway highway project.

BERKELEY-TO-SAN FRANCISCO weekday commuter ferry began operation Sep 26 under a $72,000 experimental 8-week subsidy from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission. Harbor Carriers Inc. operates the ferry, and the adult fare is $1.25.

LAST-MINUTE AMTRAK CUTBACK FIGHT

Congress completed work on Amtrak's authorization bill and sent it to President Carter on Sep 27, but the shape of the Amtrak system that it authorized seemed still unsettled. Following the Amtrak Board meeting of Sep 26, President Alan Boyd called the new Amtrak map "leaner and more efficient, permitting better use of equipment to provide smoother, more reliable service, while providing a sound foundation for future growth." The system being authorized sees five long-distance trains dropped: the NATIONAL LIMITED, NORTH COAST HIAWATHA, FLORIDIAN, LONE STAR, and HILLTOPPER. The SHENANDOAH and CARDINAL are both retained. Amtrak issued the map below after its Aug 29 Board meeting (we show the SHENANDOAH and CARDINAL as solid lines--indicating management-recommended or existing 403-b routes--while they were still broken lines on the issued map, indicating "pending legislative agreement or funding commitment, including planned 403-b routes".)



The map shows three 403-b-pending routes: the SAN JOAQUIN, Chicago-Peoria, and Kansas City-St. Louis. The state of Missouri was the first to sign a 403-b agreement under the new Amtrak bill to fund its train over a portion of the NATIONAL LIMITED route. The service will be an extension of the Chicago-St. Louis ANN RUTLEDGE. Train 301 will leave Chicago daily at 8am, reach St. Louis at 1:15, leave there at 2pm, and arrive Kansas City at 7:30pm. Train 304 will lv Kansas City daily at 10:05am, arrive St. Louis at 3:30 and leave at 4pm, reaching Chicago at 9:15pm. There has been no startup date announced for the Peoria service.

The SAN JOAQUIN is a more complicated story: the state of California has not yet signed a 403-b agreement because of a disagreement with Amtrak. Caltrans wants the agreement to cover not only the existing SAN JOAQUIN service, but also a second train on the route, while Amtrak claims that it cannot include a second train yet because its 403-b funds must cover demands for the retention of previous service rather than new trains. Caltrans and Amtrak are playing a "staring game", as one observer put it. A federal judge in Sacramento on Sep 26 granted a temporary restraining order stopping Amtrak from dropping the SAN JOAQUIN until a hearing is held on Oct 5. Amtrak might drop the train after that date, depending on the outcome of the hearing, at least temporarily until an agreement is reached. Amtrak has agreed to study the other demands that Caltrans made: a run-thru agreement to allow only one railroad crew at a time to operate the train (Brotherhood of Locomotive officialdom is opposed to that plan on grounds of alleged safety), an automatic switch at Port Chicago, extension of the train to Los Angeles, and other points. The restraining order was granted on the basis of Caltrans's pending lawsuit to halt all Amtrak cutbacks. Amtrak was attempting to take the position that it need not abide by the order, but the train is expected to run without interruption thru Oct 5. No discontinuance notices were ever posted for the SAN JOAQUIN. The other 5 trains being cut had notices similar to the one at the right for the NATIONAL LIMITED posted on Aug 30.

NOTICE

DISCONTINUANCE OF
THE NATIONAL LIMITED

Pursuant to the restructuring of the Amtrak system as mandated by the Amtrak Improvement Act of 1978, notice is hereby given that Train Nos. 30 and 31, The National Limited, operating between New York and Kansas City will be discontinued effective October 1, 1979.

Last trips operated will depart initial terminals September 30, 1979 and will operate through to final terminals.

The Broadway Limited, which also operates between New York and Pittsburgh, will also stop at Lewistown, Huntingdon, and Greensburg, Pennsylvania.

Alternate service between St. Louis and Kansas City may be operated if the State of Missouri enters into agreement with Amtrak to fund such service.

Consult agent for further information.

The morning of Sep 28 a federal judge in Wichita KS issued a temporary restraining order to halt the discontinuance of 3 trains: the LONE STAR, NORTH COAST HIAWATHA, and FLORIDIAN. This occurred just before we went to press, and Amtrak had not had time to respond to that unexpected occurrence. The judge made his decision, on the basis of a suit filed in Kansas, because the three routes allegedly had no public hearings held and no environmental impact statements filed. Amtrak said that public hearings were held, and EIP's were not necessary because the DOT plan covered environmental matters. As of Sep 28, in addition to California and Texas, Kansas, Minnesota, Alabama, the city of Nashville, the United Transportation Union and the National Association of Railroad Passengers were all plaintiffs in suits filed to halt the Oct 1 train discontinuances.

The bill that passed Congress, and is expected to be signed by Carter before Oct 1, barely missed defeat in the Senate. There, a competing bill that would have frozen the present Amtrak route structure was offered by Sen. John Melcher of Montana. The bill lost by a 44-44 tie vote on Sep 25. Reportedly the West Virginia Senators were improperly cued on how to vote, and voted against it mistakenly, believing it would cause the loss of their trains. In the House, the bill was passed by voice vote on Sep 27. The joint Senate-House conference committee that had worked over the bill was composed of Congressmen Staggers (WV), Florio (NJ), Murphy (NY), Santini (NV), Russo (IL), Broyhill (NC), Madigan (IL), Lee (NY), and Mikulski (MD); and Senators Cannon (NV), Long (LA), Exon (NB), Schmitt (NM), Packwood (OR), and Hollings (SC).

About two weeks after the authorization bill just passed, an appropriations bill must be voted upon. Amtrak has been operating under a continuing resolution. When the appropriations bill comes up, Sen. Melcher is expected to offer another amendment restoring funds for discontinued trains. Thus there remains the possibility of train restorations later. The Oct 1 changes are expected to take effect unless court action, such as the Kansas restraining order, effectively intervenes. (The bill just passed prohibits the railroads from altering their facilities, in the event that service restorations are made later.)

The INTER-AMERICAN will split at Temple, Texas, with one section running to Houston. Amtrak authorized the necessary track work at its Aug 29 Board meeting, and the state of Texas will help fund operation of the Houston section (not shown

on the adjoining map), at a later date. Other changes given here last issue are to take effect as planned, including the combining of the SILVER METEOR and CHAMPION. The ICC has directed Conrail to continue operation of the Chicago-Valparaiso commuter trains "for the time being," with Amtrak taking them over later. Amtrak was to have taken over the trains Oct 1. The new Chicago-Indianapolis service is to begin Oct 28. The trains are numbered 317 and 318 and are called the HOOSIER STATE. The Amfleet train will leave Chicago at 3:15pm and reach Indianapolis at 10:45pm; it will leave there at 7:30am and reach Chicago at 1pm. Amtrak said an hour will be trimmed from the schedule after track work is done. The Pennsylvania stops of Lewistown, Huntingdon and Greensburg, made by the NATIONAL LIMITED, will now be made by the BROADWAY LIMITED. The EMPIRE BUILDER will operate only tri-weekly, leaving Chicago on Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday, and leaving Seattle on Monday, Thursday and Saturday. It will run via St. Cloud, Staples and Detroit Lakes, Minnesota, formerly on the NORTH COAST HIAWATHA line. The rest of the EMPIRE BUILDER route will remain unchanged. There are no Oct 1 schedule changes for the PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL, MOUNT RAINIER, PIONEER, or COAST STARLIGHT. The SOUTHWEST LIMITED will have an hour added to the schedule in each direction, and will make some stops that the LONE STAR made: Topeka and Lawrence KS, and La Plata and Marceline, MO. The train will leave L.A. at 7:30pm and reach Chicago at 3:05pm; leave Chicago at 4:30pm and reach L.A. at 8:05am. The new DESERT WIND train between L.A. and Ogden via Las Vegas will begin operation Oct 28.

Besides route changes, the new legislation orders Amtrak to cut fares for elderly and handicapped travelers. It gives Amtrak $23.8 million for 403-b services, and cuts the amount of state funding for the first year of operation to 20% (from 50%), to 35% the second year and 50% thereafter. The bill provides Amtrak with $912.7 million for fiscal 1980 and $984.9 million in 1981, plus $329 million for capital expenditures in 1982.

Other service changes delayed until Oct 28 include the combining of the PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL and the MOUNT RAINIER southbound, as outlined here last issue.

EDITORIAL

★★★ A MORE POLITICAL SYSTEM ★★★

The disappointing thing about the new Amtrak bill is that politics and not reason has determined which trains stay and which are dropped. The "political" trains Amtrak has never felt comfortable with--these include the NORTH COAST HIAWATHA, the various Harley Staggers West Virginia trains, the INTER-AMERICAN, the PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL, the SAN JOAQUIN, the PIONEER, trains that Amtrak itself did not determine it ought to run, trains that politicians more or less required Amtrak to operate. Amtrak's heart has never been in them except when the politicians were watching closely. As a result they tended to be neglected and run poorly, and so turned up on the "hit lists" after showing relatively poor performance (and in some cases even when performance was good and potential was high).

But in Washington's effort to eliminate the apparently weak trains, it ends up with a system that is even more political than before. Those areas of the nation that managed to generate enough political pressure got their trains saved. The whole route criteria business is just a smokescreen around the politicians. In his introduction to the Oct 1 system timetable, Amtrak President Alan Boyd says: "Based on criteria set by Congress, the services dropped were the most expensive to operate, carried the fewest passengers, and overstrained our limited supply of reliable equipment." Let us examine the figures that should support this statement. Amtrak found that 10 trains failed to meet economic criteria; these are the last nine on the table on page 4, plus the SAN JOAQUIN, which had a projected loss of 15¢ per passenger mile and a projected PM/TM of 58. Six of these trains were

finally marked for elimination (with the SAN JOAQUIN "saved" by state intervention) and four were retained.

	Avg. loss per PM	Avg. PM/TM
Six trains dropped	13.3¢	84.5
Four trains retained	15.2¢	63.0

We worked out the table above, which shows that of the 10 trains on the final hit list the trains dropped were on the average better performers than those that were kept. To look at the extremes in the list of 10, the two best performers--the NORTH COAST HIAWATHA and the NATIONAL LIMITED--were dropped, and at the other extreme the single worst performer--the SHENANDOAH--was kept.

The economic criteria--which are suspect to begin with--didn't matter in the final analysis; the trains with the most political support were the ones kept.

We don't intend to start playing the game of "my train performs better than yours" that the DOT would like us to play. The level of service in West Virginia is not too high--it is too low. It's even lower in lots of other places, and our position is that the whole nation deserves good rail passenger service, and the sooner the better.

Mixed Train of Thoughts

THE TENTATIVE TIMETABLE: Amtrak published a red-white-and-blue systemwide schedule for the extensive Oct 1 changes, and it must be the shortest-lived and most tentative such timetable in Amtrak's history. It's effective only from Oct 1 thru Oct 27, and is full of schedules marked in red "Operation of service...is subject to Congressional action and/or State funding support", schedules with no times listed because they aren't known yet, and some services that won't begin until the timetable is out of date. Amtrak's grammarians were out to lunch when the cover was written: "Operation of certain trains shown in this timetable are (sic) subject to final Congressional action..." But it's a very interesting timetable, and certainly one of the most unusual in Amtrak's existence. The centerfold map has been completely redone, with tentative services added in in red. Says Alan Boyd in a prefatory note: "This special October 1, 1979 edition of our timetable represents an historic turning point for us. It marks the first major revision of the Amtrak system since it was established in 1971." It had a printing of 200,000, half the usual number, and should become a collector's item.....

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A SUPERLINER DISPLAY and training train will run across the EMPIRE BUILDER route starting Oct 2. That day it leaves Chicago and runs to St. Cloud, where it will be open to the public from 6:30-8:30pm. On Oct 3 it runs to Staples for a 10-11am showing, to Detroit Lakes for a noon-1pm showing, and to Fargo for a 3-5 exhibit. The other exhibit locations and times are: Oct 4, Grand Forks 6:30-7:30pm. Oct 5, Devils Lake 11am-noon, Rugby 2-3pm, Minot 4:30-7:30pm, and lay over there for crew training and service until the 7th. Oct 7, Williston 6-8pm. Oct 8, Wolf Point 9:30-10:15am, Glasgow 11:15am-noon, Malta 1-1:45pm, Havre 4-6 pm and lay over until the 10th. Oct 10, Shelby 9:45-10:45am, Cut Bank 11:15-noon, Browning 12:30-1:15pm, Belton 3:15-4pm, Whitefish 5:30-7:30pm and lay over until the 12th. Oct 12, Libby 9:30-10:30am, Sandpoint 11:30am-12:30pm, Spokane 3-6pm and lay over until the 14th. Oct 14, Pasco 3:30-5:30pm. Oct 15, Yakima 9-10am, Ellensburg 11-noon. The train will consist of 3 Superliner coaches, one Superliner diner, and two Amtech cars (the latter not open to the public). At Havre more cars will be put on for the purpose of publicity filming. On Oct 11 a press showing of a Superliner train will be held in Chicago. The train, of 3 coaches, diner and sleeper, will run to Aurora

and back with a locomotive on each end for push-pull operation. (Amtrak accepted its first Superliner sleeper on Sep 20, and this will be on the train.) This display train will be open to the public in Chicago on Oct 13, and on the 14th will run to Milwaukee for display, to La Crosse on the 15th, and to Minneapolis/St. Paul on Oct 16. At each location along the EMPIRE BUILDER route, the train will arrive about 30 minutes ahead of the display time.....

OCTOBER 28 TIMETABLES, when Standard Time returns, will have some Northeast Corridor adjustments in addition to the changes given on pages 12-14 of this issue...

★ ★ ★

HOW IS SEPTEMBER patronage holding up? There are no official figures available yet, but an Amtrak spokesman said that the impression one gets is that it is higher than Sep 1978. For example, the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR is still carrying 3 sleepers, which were scheduled to be cut back on Sep 9, after the final summer rush of Labor Day. Caltrans estimates that SAN DIEGAN ridership for September will top 95,000.....

HEARINGS WERE HELD in California on the proposed Los Angeles-Oxnard commuter trains, and the last one didn't go well for train supporters. SP was well-prepared with witnesses who testified against the plan. A Greyhound representative said that his company would run buses on the route for half the subsidy. Witnesses said a GM plant along the line would be disrupted 60% of the time because of the train's operation. The general feeling is that the train will be approved, but perhaps not on the most favorable conditions.....

THE STATUS OF other California train plans is as follows: Arbitration is continuing on the proposed Sacramento-Southern California overnight train, and is expected to be completed by the first of 1980. The Sacramento-San Jose service is dormant at this time, as Caltrans has decided to push for one request at a time. This also means that the seventh SAN DIEGAN request is being delayed.....

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ANOTHER FARE INCREASE is coming on Amtrak on Oct 28, when most fares will rise 7%. Other recent fare increases were 6% on Mar 5 and 7% on July 15. Amtrak said the higher ticket prices are due to increased costs of fuel and other needs, and noted that the DOT has urged it to increase its revenues. Some discount excursion fares will be added between Oct 28 and May 22, 1980, Amtrak said, from 15 to 30% off regular coach fare on many longer-distance runs. Many rail observers believe, and RTN agrees, that the elimination of the USA Rail Pass was "bad business", particularly in the off-season.....

SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION Neil Goldschmidt has been okayed by the Senate, and he was formally sworn in on Sep 24. A preliminary swearing-in, pending Senate approval, occurred Aug 15, as reported last issue.....

VIA RAIL CANADA changes its fare policy regarding children on Oct 1. No children under age 8 can travel alone on its trains unless accompanied by an adult 18 years or older. Children between 8 and 11 can travel alone only when certain conditions are met; such children must travel first class when it is available and must pay full adult fare. Transport 2000 protested the new policy, asking "what has happened to cause VIA Rail Canada to change those traditional railway policies they inherited?".....

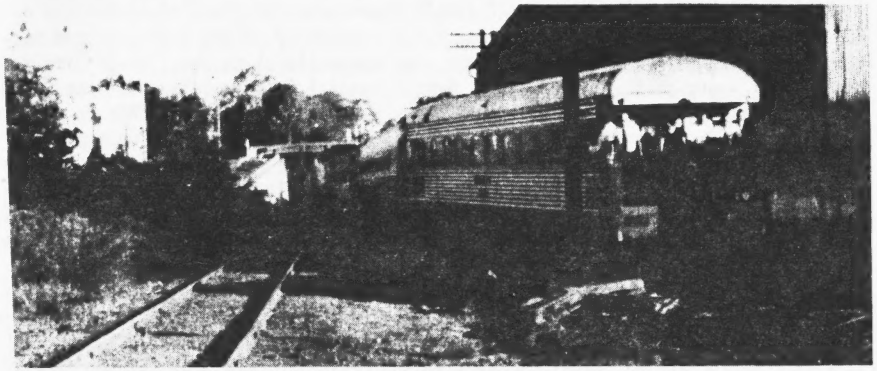
TRANSPORT 2000 CANADA'S annual meeting will be held in Montreal on Oct 20, at 1:30pm at Cathedral Hall, 1440 Union Avenue. Principal speaker will be VIA Rail Vice President Leo Moisan.....

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS: In issue 191 on page 19 the date of the MONTREALER's 6-hour delay should have been Aug 1-2, not Aug 4.....

EASTBOUND SOUTHWEST LIMITED seen in Kansas City on Sep 2 was carrying 2 domes: dome sleeper 9222 (one of 3 sleepers) and dome observation car 9251 "Silver Penthouse" with rooms used as dorm space. The SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR has been running two dome coaches in late September.....

VIA RAIL CANADA'S Jun 17-Oct 27 system timetable contains an error in table 28, showing a reference to sleeping cars on Rapido train 63 Montreal-Toronto. And table 47 should be deleted entirely, as the Flin Flon-Osborne Lake train is discontinued...

THE HOOSIER STATE, the new Chicago-Indianapolis run due to start on Oct 28, is termed a "demonstration" run, and Amtrak authorized $1.2 million at its Aug 29 Board meeting for track alterations to make the run possible. The train will run from Chicago to Crawfordsville IN on L&N and from there to Indianapolis on Conrail. On Sep 20 Amtrak ran a test train from Indianapolis to Chicago and return. It consisted of F40 engine #316, newly refurbished coach 4615, Amfleet cars 21152 and 21059, and track inspection car 10000 (see photo above taken at Crawfordsville by Robert La Foe). The train left Indianapolis at 6:30am and reached Crawfordsville at 7:45am (15mins early), and left at 8:05 for an expected Chicago arrival at 12:01 pm. The train was to leave Chicago at 1:30, and it reached Crawfordsville again at 5:05pm (5mins early) and left at 5:20 to reach Indianapolis at 7pm. Crews were changed at Crawfordsville and Lafayette, and thus 3 crews were used--2 L&N and one Conrail. One of the main reasons for the run is so Amtrak can move cars to its Beech Grove Maintenance Facility near Indianapolis without paying freight hauling charges. The train was proposed by Indiana Senator Birch Bayh to replace the two trains the state loses: the FLORIDIAN and the NATIONAL LIMITED. But some officials in the state are calling it a "booby prize" and noting that its proposed 7-hour schedule will drive customers away. Preparation work in Crawfordsville consists of building a track connection between the two railroads. On the 43-mile Conrail section, track surfacing and tie renewal is being done, and standby power at the Indianapolis station has been authorized. The Chicago-Crawfordsville leg is the same as that now being used by the doomed FLORIDIAN.....



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A TEST TRAIN was run from Chicago to East Peoria (and return?) on Sep 11 to try out the planned-for Peoria run that Rock Island used to make. It was the first time an Amtrak train ran on the Toledo, Peoria & Western route. It took the ICG from Chicago, leaving at 9am, to Chenoa IL, and then the TP&W to East Peoria, and the trip reportedly took about 3½ hours. The train ran at up to 79mph on the ICG and 55mph on the TP&W. Some Illinois sources say the train should start operation on Oct 28. Amtrak plans to build a ticket office and boarding platform in East Peoria..... HURRICANE FREDERIC'S WINDS and tides caused the cancellation of the Amtrak CRESCENT, train 19, on Sep 12. Southern Railway ceased operations thru Slidell LA with the last northbound freight passing thru at 5:53pm on the 12th. A southbound freight was terminated at Slidell on the 13th, and the mainline was opened to traffic at 10:30am on Sep 13. The CRESCENT, train 20, was annulled from New Orleans to Birmingham on the 13th, and that date's train 19 was also annulled.....

SOUTHBOUND PANAMA LIMITED had a failure of head-end electrical power near Jack-

son MS on Sep 1, and the train ran from there to New Orleans in hot, sunny weather with no lights, air conditioning, or heated food or drinks. At Brookhaven MS a sleeping car passenger staged a sitdown in front of the engine, but after a 6-min delay was persuaded by police to resume his trip. (The train was already running 2½ hours late.) Attempted repairs by the ICG at McComb did not help the train's hotel power. Consist of the train was engines 714 & 716, cars 1214, electric sleeper 2997, 20224, 21879, 21873, 21888, 20044, 21117, 21111, 21889, and electric coach 4605 (one of the first uses of electric coaches on the train).....

NORTHBOUND MOUNT RAINIER on Sep 2 ran 12 Superliner cars, pulled by two F40's, due to football crowds. The same consist ran southbound, along with a second section consisting of F40 engine, steam car, two conventional coaches, ex-BN dome coach, and lunch counter diner 8151. Normal consist is 4 Superliners. The PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL got Amfleet cars that weekend..... RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR is getting very large loads these days, with the better connections. The train is reported sold out for September. An annoying practice, reports a recent rider, is a new requirement that all passengers lineup at all manned stations to give up their tickets before boarding. Equipment is looking shabbier, and menus are reduced some.....

AUTO-TRAIN CORPORATION is in deep financial trouble, according to an article in the Oct 1 issue of Forbes magazine. Its financial losses are getting heavier--$4.4 million in 1978, and the loss for the first half of 1979 was higher than 1978. The main problem, says the magazine: the fares are too high compared to competitive air and auto travel. A-T wants to issue more stock to raise money.....

FIRST REVENUE RUN of Superliner cars on the EMPIRE BUILDER from Chicago is expected to be Oct 28--this not confirmed by Amtrak..... E. M. FRIMBO was reported seen riding the LRT line in Edmonton, Canada on Aug 22, during a stopover en route to the Peace River country. His group was to continue west via the Northern Alberta Rwy and the Alberta Resources Rwy... News is updated thru Sep 28, 1979.

★ BIG BOYD REORGANIZATION OF AMTRAK

Amtrak announced a massive reorganization of its staff, following the Sep 26 Board meeting. There will be three major departments within Amtrak: (1) Passenger Services and Communication, (2) Train Operation and Maintenance, and (3) Financial and Administrative Control. There will be one vice president for each.

The VP for group one will be Clark Tyler, who has been VP-Governmental Affairs since Sep 1978. Reporting to him will be VP-Passenger Services John V. Lombardi (former Marketing executive); VP-Public Affairs Carole Foryst, newly appointed to succeed Ed Edel; and VP-Government Affairs Lawrence D. Gilson.

Group two will be headed by VP Thomas P. Hackney Jr., who was Ass't VP and Chief Mechanical Officer. Reporting to him will be VP-Operations Robert A. Herman; VP-Chief Engineer Robert F. Lawson; and VP-Chief Mechanical Officer Frank D. Abate.

Group three has no VP appointed yet, but reporting to that VP will be VP-Labor Relations & Personnel George F. Daniels; VP-Computer Services Robert W. Hyer; and VP-Finance and Treasurer Don R. Brazier. These three group VP's will report directly to President Alan Boyd.

In addition, four separate officers are named: VP-Marketing William S. Norman; VP-General Counsel Paul S. Mickey Jr.; VP-Corporate Planning William N. Daly; and Corporate Secretary Elyse G. Wander.

Of special interest is the appointment of Amtrak's first woman VP--Carole Foryst, 39, who comes to Amtrak's Public Affairs Dept. from her own business. Before that she was Deputy Director of Public Affairs for the Dept. of the Interior and Staff Assistant to the Secretary of the Treasury. Earlier she was financial reporter for the Los Angeles Times and the Chicago Sun Times.

Amtrak's new Marketing VP, who replaces Alfred Michaud, is age 41 and comes from the position of VP-Eastern Division, Cummins Engine Co. of Columbus, Indiana.

CONVERSATION WITH REX HOLLAND
by Peter Putnam Bretz

On a Monday in July, I found myself on the sixth floor of the Amtrak office building in Washington. In due course I was ushered into the inner sanctum of H. Rex Holland, assistant vice president, On-Board Services. It was a standard sized office, simply furnished. A man in his mid-fifties, Mr. Holland rose and greeted us warmly.

RTN: "We've recently traveled thousands of miles on VIA, comparing Canadian services to Amtrak. The trains up north come out ahead, yet there are signs that the excellent trains and impeccable service standards have eroded under VIA."

HRH: "It's our intention to bring Amtrak up to a standard that makes the present VIA service look like Amtrak did a few years ago."

RTN: "The current menus do seem somewhat limited in scope."

(HRH replied that economy reasons are foremost. If too many choices are offered, some items won't move as fast as others and there will be waste, so dishes are offered that the public likes. Yet, there will be a recurrence of the regional specialty--each train having its own special dish.)

HRH: "Oh yes, and we will be bringing back the Duck." (He sighed, and then said how he wished there was enough equipment available to have hot dogs and hamburgers served only in snack cars; then there could be a really first-class operation.)

(I asked to look at a menu and was handed one off a big stack behind his desk. I pointed out that it's no longer possible to order pie ala mode without having to pay the full ice cream price. Pie 65¢, ice cream 55¢, total: $1.20. It was formerly 85¢. At this, HRH sprang into action. He punched out a telephone number. The speaker was turned on so we could hear the conversation.

"Uh, Ray, when we set up the new fall menus, see what you can do about offering pie ala mode at a separate price, will you?"

"Yes sir, will do."

RTN: "Very quick service."

HRH: "No sense dragging things out. Would you like some coffee?"

(While pouring our coffee into complimentary-size paper cups and stirring in Amtrak sugar, I asked the wholesale price of the hamburger that sells on Amfleet for $1.50. A quick check revealed a 67¢ charge to Amtrak. Couldn't it be sold for about $1.00 like at McDonald's? After all, the quality is no better.)

HRH: "Well, we have to cover overhead. An Amtrak employee makes about $7 an hour plus overtime, guarantee, etc. McDonald's pays minimum wages, maybe $2.70 an hour. So you can see the difference."

(HRH went on:) "Let me tell you--over the years I've been in this industry, I've held some extremely responsible positions. The Cunard Lines provided service which will never be seen again while the human race exists! And I did pretty well with Pan Am. If there is any success going for me, it is because I've never learned to consider myself important. I try to be forthright and direct, and I cherish above all--I really mean this--honor."

As HRH talked to us in British tones about how he has improved OBS and how he intends to go still further, he said that when he took over at Amtrak he met with OBS people including those on the trains. "...I offered them blood, sweat, toil and tears." Just like Winston Churchill. In other words, the ex-Cunard Food Service Chief explained, there will have to be some more enduring of hardships before we can turn the corner.

RTN: "It does seem that there has been quite a bit of substantial improvement since you took over. There is more pleasantness in dining cars, less rudeness. We see more smiling faces and helpful hands. Significantly fewer incidents of lounge cars closing early or opening late. By no means are the problems all solved,

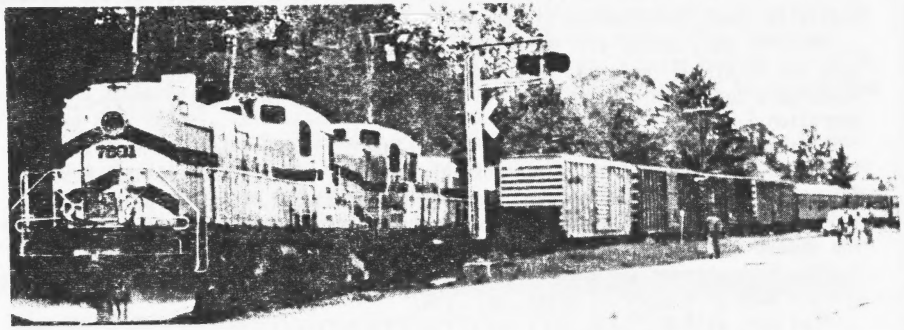
but it surely is better. Yet, we've asked some waiters and porters if any new outstanding procedures or edicts have come down the line since you've started, and they have indicated nothing they could recall. So, how HAVE you managed it so far?"

HRH: "...For one thing, I established an On-Board Service newsletter to keep my people informed. Then, we hold rap sessions. I meet with all employees and, very openly, tell them the 'facts'."

One of those facts, he said, is that the OBS job is vital to Amtrak. He feels that if anyone talks against an OBS employee, he's talking against Rex Holland himself. In addition, he started a "fair" discipline program. During the first quarter of 1979, 312 people came up for discipline charges. Of those, 286 were found guilty. If 300 people were sent up three years ago, only 3 or 4 cases would have "stuck", he indicated.

HRH: "Most people really want discipline, provided it is administered fairly and honorably. And I do that."

FANTRIP ON THE LAMOILLE VALLEY RAILROAD



RTN's Peter Roehm took a rail fantrip back on May 25, a weekend ramble sponsored by the NRHS Tri-State Chapter (NJ) and private car owner George Pins, that ran via Amtrak/CV from New York to St. Albans VT, CV mixed train to Fonda Jct, Lamoille Valley Railroad to St. Johnsbury and back to Sheldon Jct, then CV to St. Albans and Amtrak/CV back to New York. Private sleepers "Shenandoah", "Virginia Beach", "Pennsy 120" and "Clover Colony" carried the group in style.

A book could be written on the adventure, but some highlights will be given here. The CV mixed train portion of the trip used EMD switchers 1509 and 1510 and eleven cars, designated train 539. At noon on the 26th Fonda Jct was reached, where LVRC RS-2 engine 7801, "Morrisville", was waiting to run the "passenger extra" to Sheldon Jct. There the train became a mixed train again with the addition of LVRC boxcar 4048. About Cambridge Jct it began to rain. At Morrisville there was an overnight stop, and the rains quit.

At 9:00 the morning of the 27th, the train, now composed of engines 7801 & 7802, one gondola, 4 boxcars and the private cars, departed for St. Johnsbury. A photo stop on the way was at Joe's Pond (photo above). From there the descent was slow and wobbly. At Badger Gap there was a deep rock cut, and the outcroppings dented the Pennsy 120 in four spots on its roof.

At St. J the cars were set out and six new ones picked up. After an hour the train ran back uphill, with 7802 in the lead and "Clover Colony" on the rear. The rocks once more dented the 120. Then at East Hardwick the lead truck of boxcar LVRC 4018 derailed. In an hour it was rerailed and the car set out. Meanwhile, the travelers enjoyed a buffet-style Italian dinner aboard the train. At Morrisville the crew changed for final uneventful segment of the trip.

The 61 travelers enjoyed a memorable weekend on a railroad whose predecessors' passenger service passed into history on June 30, 1956.

CARS & CONSISTS

*SHENANDOAH, train 32, Cincinnati Sep 16: engines 278, 314; cars 20031, 21859.

*CARDINAL, train 50, Cincinnati Sep 16: engine 728(?); cars 1208, 1154, 2883 (no name), 20219, (electrified coaches:) 4601, 4602, 4603.

*HILLTOPPER, train 66, Tri-State Sep 17: engine 266; cars 20007, 21807.

*COLONIAL, train 171, Richmond Sep 17: engine 277, cars 20018, 21225, 21143.

*SOUTHWEST LIMITED, train 3, Kansas City Sep 13: engines 510, 526; cars 1080, 1513, 9919, 9946, 9985, 9922, dome 9354, 2215 "Indian Maid", 2756 "Palm Path", 2619 "Pacific Meadow", (on at K.C.:) 1217.

*LONE STAR, train 15, Kansas City Sep 13: engines 527, 525; cars 1108, 2220 "Indian Squaw", 8061, 9929, 9925, 9908, 3382, 2350 "Regal Dome", (on at K.C.:) 1238, (deadheads off at K.C.:) 4814, 4818.

*NATIONAL LIMITED, train 30, Kansas City Aug 31: engines 311, 264 (F40s); cars 1375, 1248, 2900, 2923, 20210, 21802, 21829, 21849, 21819 (off at Phila. to train 143), (off at Indianapolis:) 1302 buffer car, 9910, 9920, (on at Indianapolis, to Phila.:) 1301, 1303. Same, train 31, Sep 5: engines 412 (E), 265 (F40); cars 1370, 1354, 2992, 2911, 20205, 21859, 21862, 21054, 21810, 10600 buffer car, 2654 (off at K.C. for train 3 of Sep 6), heater car 673 (A-unit blacked out).

*CSS&SB train 66, South Bend Sep 12: units 25, 8.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"Federal funds for rural air service are considered a public service. Funds for Amtrak are called payment for losses."

--Modern Railroad magazine, August.

"We have to save Amtrak a while longer. The Smithsonian hasn't finished laying the tracks between the dinosaur skeleton and the Wright brothers' plane."

--Pittsburgh Press editorial, September 1.

SLIP OF THE MONTH CLUB***

"Amtrak's Big Trail Cutback."

--Title of editorial in San Francisco Chronicle, Sept. 1.

(That old Santa Fe trail ain't what it used to be.)

RAIL FANTRIPS

Sep 29 and/or 30: The "Prairie Marksman" special train on TP&W & Amtrak Chicago-Ft. Madison RT. Coach or sleeping cars in day service. RT fare $99 to $140. The Golden Arrow Line, Box 6843, Chicago IL 60680.

Oct 5-7: Trip from St. Louis to Denver and Cumbres & Toltec Scenic RR, incl DOT test facility, other features. Air St. Louis-Denver. $309 & up. Amer. Ass'n of Railroaders, Inc., 3422 Osage St, St. Louis MO 63118. 752-3148.

Oct 25: Mass. Bay RRE Annual Banquet, Summerside Lodge (former B&M station), Malden MA. Roast beef, all-you-can-eat $8.95. Speaker: Jim Boyd, Editor, Railfan & Railroad. Advance reservations required (before Oct 18). Mass. Bay RR Enthusiasts, Box 61, Needham MA 02194.

Nov 10: Utica to Lake Placid NY and return. The entire Adirondack Railway (284 miles round trip). $35. Railroad Enthusiasts, Inc., 510 Hattie St., Schenectady NY 12304.

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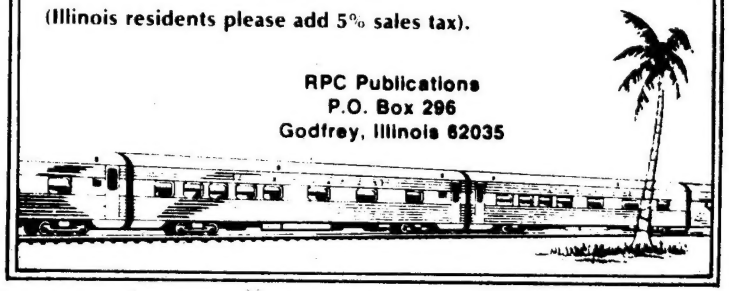

AMTRAK RIDERSHIP FIGURES FOR JUNE

Metroliners	157,002
NE Corr Conventional	492,752
New Haven-Springfld	30,985
NY-Philadelphia	207,851
Phila-Harrisburg	90,648
NY-Harrisburg	17,856
NY-Buffalo/Detroit	67,280
Chicago-St. Louis	19,276
Chicago-Milwaukee	30,904
Chicago-Detroit	49,824
Chicago-Carbondale	14,385
Chicago-Quincy	7,439
L.A.-San Diego	124,617
Seattle-Portland	9,232
Seattle-Vancouver	7,294
Washington-Cincinnati	6,692
Wash.-Martinsburg	23,351
Oakland-Bakersfield	10,769
NY-Montreal	12,805
Chicago-Port Huron	11,271
Chicago-Dubuque	6,237
St. Paul-Duluth	9,304
Washington-Montreal	39,524
NY-Florida	80,546
Chicago-NY/Washington	27,399
Chicago-Cincinnati/DC	18,108
Kansas City-NY/DC	24,035
Chicago-Seattle (N)	19,925
Chicago-Seattle (S)	21,861
Chicago-San Francisco	32,585
Chicago-Los Angeles	33,469
Chicago-Houston	30,600
Chicago-New Orleans	22,840
Chicago-Florida	20,039
Chicago-Laredo	19,813
L.A.-New Orleans	12,524
L.A.-Seattle	56,123
Chicago-NY/Boston	29,950
Boston-Newport News	61,640
NY-Savannah	46,075
Seattle-Salt Lake	17,064
Boston-Tri-State	6,839
NY-New Orleans	27,438
Special trains	1,500

Amtrak released these ridership figures on Sept 4. See last issue for May figures.

Total system-wide June ridership was 2,056,871--up 24.6% over June '78. NE Corridor total was 997,094--up 17.3 percent. Short Distance figures were 409,880--up 26.6%. Long Distance was up a whopping 37.4%, to 648,397.

June was the first month in Amtrak's history that over 2 million passengers were carried.